

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON JOB CREATION/JOB RETENTION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

April 20, 2015

4:00 p.m.

Chairman Corriveau called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Corriveau, Ludwig, Long, Levasseur

Absent: Alderman Katsiantonis

Messrs.: M. Skelton, J. Wichert, W. Craig, N. Kershaw

3. [Discussion on passenger rail with representatives of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce and the Manchester Development Corporation.](#)

Chairman Corriveau called the men forward to introduce themselves. Present were: Joe Wichert, Manchester Development Corporation, Will Craig, Economic Development Director, and Mike Skelton, Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce.

Chairman Corriveau stated thank you all for being here. When we outlined stakeholders in the community that we wanted input from on the possibility of passenger rail serving our City, certainly the business community was among the first key stakeholders we wanted to hear from. Obviously the Chamber of Commerce and the MDC are prominent leaders in our business community. I guess we will start off with some opening remarks and make this a dialogue. I know there is no presentation or anything today but I do hope that we can hear

your thoughts on the potential that passenger rail may bring to our City and have a good back and forth on this issue. Mike, we will start with you.

Mike Skelton, Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce, stated thank you for the opportunity. I appreciate the chance to come and talk about passenger rail. Just a little background. The chamber has been working on this issue for the better part of a decade. It is obviously a long-term, complex, major infrastructure issue that requires a lot of planning and analysis at the state, local and federal level. What I thought I would do is share a couple of thoughts on how the chamber views this issue, why we have been engaged in it and then a quick thumbnail from our perspective on where we see it standing right now and where it is in the process. The chamber has historically been very engaged in transportation and infrastructure issues. The simple reason being that in order for businesses to grow here, to thrive here and to want to locate here they need the infrastructure in place to support them whether that is roads, bridges, highways, energy facilities, transportation options, airport...in the greater Manchester area we are blessed with some really good infrastructure, a very convenient location in terms of where we are located in relation to Boston, the seacoast and various tourism amenities. We have a lot of really good attributes going for us and passenger rail has been an opportunity that has been debated and discussed for some time, probably since it ceased to operate a number of decades ago. There has always been an interest in restoring it at some point. I would say it was a little more than a decade ago that the chamber along with the Greater Nashua chamber started to get reengaged in discussions on how to explore the restoration of passenger rail service to Manchester up along the Route 3 corridor. The first step that was put in place was the creation of the NH Rail Transit Authority at the state level. There was legislation that did that in 2006 and in proceeding legislative sessions there was legislation to put in place a rail liability cap that allowed the state to further be in position to explore a rail project of this size and scope. There was also some

attempt to repeal or reform the rail authority in later legislative sessions. Through it all the chamber's position, our perspective on the issue has been...we view rail as an issue that carries with enormous economic potential. I think there is very little debate that restoration of passenger rail would have a lot of positive impacts on the state, on the region and on the community. The question has always been how do we fund it. How do we pay for the service and does what we pay for it return itself in economic benefits on a yearly annual long-term basis. That, I think is actually pretty exciting to have a discussion about now because really in the last year for the first time we have gotten to a place where we start to have real numbers to consider the impact and potential economic benefits of this project. Two years ago the state was finally able to move forward on something called a transportation alternatives analysis, which was a study done by a consultant in conjunction with the NH DOT and the Rail Authority as part of the federal review of a potential rail project. Just this year that study was released and it contained for the first time some initial projections on ridership and economic impact, and it teed up some ideas for funding so it was, for the first time, a real analysis of if we are going to build a rail project in southern NH what could it look like and how could you go about it. For the chamber that was exciting. I think it was a good step forward. We have reviewed that study and we are continuing to review that study. We think it is a good starting place. We also think that there is room for a deeper analysis, particularly on the economic benefit side. So as a chamber one of the things we are talking about is sponsoring or funding our own independent analysis outside of that process that would look strictly from the business community perspective of what would be the economic impact in terms of economic development, job creation, property taxes, and workforce development of this project. That is a project separate from any sort of state process that we are looking at that we think would be very valuable to policymakers as they consider this issue. Just to wrap up, we view the issue right now as being at a critical juncture. There has been a great degree of discussion about this project in the last

12 months, particularly with the study coming out this spring. Currently the state senate is reviewing the capital budget. The Governor had proposed in her initial capital budget proposal funding the project development phase of the capital corridor project, which included an environmental and engineering analysis and we view that as a really important step because for the first time we will be able to really ascertain what the final cost will be for the project. This will really get into the details of how you would actually physically build the rail line, what the environmental impacts would be, and what structures you would need to put in place to secure that project. We view that as a very important step in terms of the state vetting the feasibility of this project and coming to a conclusion of whether it is feasible for us to move forward. I think there is a question of should we fund that sort of step if we don't know for sure whether we are going to move forward. Our perspective is that if as a state we are going to fully consider whether passenger rail is a good idea or not, we need to have all of the facts. We need to know exactly how much it is going to cost and we need to know exactly what the benefits are so we can look at the ROI and make a judgment as to whether it is a good investment or not. That is why we view this next phase, the project development phase, as an absolute must step for the state. The chamber, along with a number of businesses and other business organizations, is lobbying and asking for the senate to restore some funding to the capital budget to allow that process to move forward. The original request from the Governor was for \$4 million for the project development phase. That would certainly allow the project to move forward. If not \$4 million, a phased funding request at some level would be a great step forward and allow the momentum and the progress to continue so that conceivably in the next year or two we would be at a place where we finally would be able to make a decision as a state as to whether we move forward on this project or not and whether the numbers make sense and how the costs stack up to the potential benefits. That is just a quick summary from our perspective and I would be more than happy to answer any questions as we go along.

Chairman Corriveau stated why don't we next move to Joe with MDC and wrap up with Will and then get into questions and answers.

Joe Wichert, Manchester Development Corporation, stated Mr. Skelton covered a majority of the points but I guess that makes my life easy. MDC has not focused as heavily on the rail proposal. We have had a presentation by Southern NH and the Rail Authority in 2014 and at the end of 2012 or the beginning of 2013 we also had a presentation with Mr. Brewer at the airport. When he gave his presentation one of the things we noticed even then was that MHT is one of the few airports that does not have a rail tie in and that was brought up as one of the reasons why the numbers aren't as high at the airport as they could be. In the audience with us this evening is Mr. Newton Kershaw from MDC who is past chairman. He was chair when we had the airport presentation. I think as a group we are very interested to see the impact of that proposal and what it would do to the City. There are certainly a lot of different scenarios where we can see it being a huge benefit to the City. We met with Dyn and they have certainly given us their take on this and the benefits they see with it. From my side, I have talked to some of the people in my field that go to Boston. They have a little bit of a different take on it but I would probably say there were 60% to 80% of them who said they would still do it even though it might not be their ideal because of the convenience factor of it and the cost. I think as a group we are very interested in seeing the results of the study and an analysis of the numbers. Unfortunately, we just don't have an official position that we would give to say we are either in favor or opposed. I think if you talked to individual members, probably most if not all are in favor of it with the caveat of how will it be paid for.

William Craig, Economic Development Director, stated like Joe I have the benefit of following some people who said some good things about this. I don't have comments that are distinctly different from what you have heard from both of these guys. The business community, I think, by and large is supportive of this but a lot of questions remain on what the funding sources will be in both the short term and the long term.

Chairman Corriveau stated the Rail Transit Authority made a presentation before this committee and one of the real points of emphasis was on public/private partnerships and the importance of those in bringing rail to Manchester. I know they are working hard at the state house to try to...apparently they need enabling legislation for a particular piece of this public/private partnership for a rail project but one of the comments they made that I would like to get your thoughts on is the NHRTA said that they believe that there are members of the Manchester business community that are so pro-rail that they believe considerable private money could be raised within the City to help minimize or mitigate any City public funds being put into the project. I think we all agree that the City is going to have to pay something. We don't know what but you are all connected very heavily in our business community and what I am asking you is from your discussions amongst your peers or Will when you talk with business people looking to bring or start a business here tell me about the public/private partnership issue and how viable you think that is. It seems to the Rail Transit Authority that it is very imperative. Do you think there is viability with the private sector stepping up to help defray costs?

Mr. Skelton replied I think there is potential. I guess it depends on what the definition of considerable is. As an example, the Manchester and Nashua chambers a number of years ago were able to raise \$120,000 from private sector business donors to fund the application for the feasibility study that was just

released. We needed to raise a state match in order to pursue that and at that time there were no state dollars available so the private sector stepped up and funded that to give us this baseline, this huge amount of data we can now work off of to assess this project. I think that was an early demonstration of there being a lot of support out there. For no other reason than people in the business community know this is a big opportunity and we wouldn't be doing our jobs if we didn't fully explore it and have all of the facts before we make a decision. I think that is what the motivation is. In terms of going forward, I absolutely think there is interest in public/private partnerships, particularly around the rail sites themselves and the station development. How those partnerships would be structured and what that would entail it is far too early to say. I think you would find considerable support from the business community in exploring how they could be part of that solution and provide value to the City, the region and the state to see the project move forward. I can't put a price tag on it but the larger question of cost that the business community would be more interested in in the near term is from a state level we would have to make a decision. We would have to establish a policy as to how we would fund this in the long-term. I think the business folks I talk to do view this as an obligation of the state to fund this as a piece of infrastructure much like we would fund a highway or some other transportation system. That is a question that has to be answered but that is not one that the business community, I think could support. We pay business profits tax and business enterprise tax for the purpose of supporting the development of that infrastructure at the state level. I think there is some potential. We need to figure out exactly what the expectations are and what the ceiling is.

Mr. Wichert stated that is a pretty fair assessment because we haven't necessarily had anybody come up and say we are willing to volunteer X amount of dollars. I think from the scenario that Mike was mentioning, if you looked at the site in the City and would that be able to be a private/public partnership I can envision that

working just because of the uniqueness of it and what it would entail. I think the opportunities exist. I just don't think we have necessarily done enough research to identify fully what they are.

Chairman Corriveau asked Will in your time as Economic Development Director have you had any conversations with business leaders in the City or people looking to possibly do business here about the rail issue?

Mr. Craig answered as Mike indicated I think the business community prefer that this be an investment that the City or state would make in any other infrastructure project. I don't think it would be there first choice but I think they are interested in being partners. At what cost and at what level I think we still have a lot of work to do to determine but I think the interest is there.

Alderman Long stated after listening to that presentation, the financial matters were substantially reduced. There was a 30% buy in by the feds that is now at 50% so my understanding is that there was a \$6 or \$7 million state bond that they may be looking for the...actually they told us that the cities wouldn't be responsible for that. There may be a minimum, if any, cost to the City if these numbers remain the same. I know in speaking with Mr. Wichert and Mr. Craig that everybody is on board with getting this. Mr. Skelton did I hear you say that 68% of your members would be in favor of this?

Mr. Skelton responded I didn't give a number but there was a survey done one or two years ago. The UNH Survey Center had done an opinion survey on a bunch of policy issues with rail being one of them and 68% had supported passenger rail restoration to NH. The opposition was minimal. There was a big chunk of people who didn't have an opinion. So 68% in polling is a pretty strong majority and that reflects what I hear from folks in the business community. I would say it is

actually in excess of that. That being said, the chamber's perspective is it would be irresponsible for us to say we think this project should happen no matter what without knowing what the costs are and how we are going to pay for it. Our view is that we know this is a big opportunity and we know there are a lot of potential economic benefits. We want to see a full analysis done at the state level. We need to have a good healthy dialogue on what a potential funding plan would look like. Even though this project has been talked about for the better part of a decade at the state level, there has really never been a funding plan put on paper that two sides could discuss and debate. That is the place we think we really need to go and at that point it would be appropriate for all parties to weigh in and say yes this is a good investment of our tax dollars and our resources. What we don't think is a good idea is to just dismiss it out of hand and say this is something we can't afford or we shouldn't explore or there are no benefits. There clearly are benefits. It is a question of do the benefits exceed the cost. You outlined some of the initial numbers in the study and they are pretty favorable and worthy of exploration. Speaking in just round numbers from the feasibility study, the total cost was put at \$250 million for the capital corridor project of which potentially \$100 million could be put in by the feds and additional \$75 million could be put in by the MBTA. That is a big chunk of the capital costs being put in by external partners. The remaining part would be the NH obligation, which would have to be paid for likely by a state bond or another option and then whatever that bond expense is minus fare box revenue would be the ongoing subsidy you would have to pay for each year. So the question for the state and policymakers is do all of these other benefits whether it is new tax revenue, jobs that are created or economic development and however we can capture and measure them outweigh what that ongoing subsidy is that we have to pay each year. That is the analysis that hasn't been done yet but I think we are moving in that direction, which ultimately we really need to do if we are going to make a good decision on this project.

Alderman Long stated as you stated the House pulled 100% of the funding for that. You said the chamber needs to organize and go to the Senate to see if there is even partial funding. Have you initiated that?

Mr. Skelton responded yes. We have indicated to the Senate Capital Budget committee in a formal request our support for restoring the funding. Actually I am working on finalizing this week a letter from the Manchester and Nashua chambers, a co-branded letter, that is not only from our organizations but we have roughly 30 business leaders and individual businesses that have signed on to that letter – major employers and major businesses from across southern NH to express their support for that request. We are hopeful and optimistic that the Senate committee will consider that. Obviously if they restore funding in their version of the capital budget it will have to go to a conference and there will still be a ways to go but even if they were to restore half of that \$4 million request that would allow for the process to move forward for at least the next two years.

Alderman Long stated my understanding from the last report was that if everything goes normally and there is already \$4 million gone so that stopped but in 2020 it could be up and running. For every delay...if we delay for two years we are looking at 2022, etc. The only other process I thought of is at some point the Governor & Council has to approve this and my understanding is that they have a 3-2 opposition with the one who represents Nashua saying he would be in favor of it for Nashua but not Manchester. My concern as a state rep is I don't feel like I am just going to be voting for Nashua because once you get that vote now try to get them to vote to expend more revenue for Manchester. I think it has to be a joint or nothing thing. Have you considered that?

Mr. Skelton replied the real value of that study that came out this spring was it answered that question of should we go to Nashua, should we go to Manchester, should we go to Concord, what is the right proposal. They looked at all of those different alternatives and what would deliver the most value and when it came down to ridership projections, it was really a no-brainer that you have to build it to Manchester to get the maximum amount of ridership and value out of the rail line. For a long time, there was a significant debate that we should just build it to the state line or right over the border into Nashua and that would be sufficient. This study really showed the opposite of that. That really wouldn't have the measure of impact that going all the way to Manchester would, particularly downtown Manchester and the airport. Those are the critical links. The airport is such a huge part of this that there is a lot of benefit to tying in there in terms of ridership and ridership is really the key to creating foot traffic which creates the economic development benefits and all of the potential that comes out of this project. We would absolutely be supportive of that and I think the study has indicated that is the right option. It is my understanding that in just the last month the Rail Authority formally endorsed the build to Manchester option as their preferred option. This is the state's body of rail experts saying that this is the right option and if we are not going to do that then we shouldn't be doing anything.

Alderman Long stated I am looking on our end at what we can do to help the business community to move this forward. At the state house I asked some communities to put it to the voters as to whether they are supportive or not but then again you don't have the financial investment that it is going to take so would that really be fair to ask a voter at this time. Having that number would be fairer for somebody to say worst-case scenario your burden would be X. I think the people that object to this are infrastructure people like the highway people. The state has a hard time changing on anything. If we have a train is that going to take

vehicles off of 93 and is that going to lower my maintenance, etc. so that contractor X is not going to be getting what he is getting every year now. Those are all involved in it. I don't know where you feel that we can help in the business community. Should we ask the voters or is there some other way we can be advocating on your side to keep this moving? We are not saying let's invest \$100 million today. Let's not stop taking those baby bites to see that next year we are that much closer to knowing what the realities are. The bottom line is we need to know what the realities are. We don't know that. To say no...how do I say no when I don't even know what the reality is? I am of the strong opinion that this is Manchester's only opportunity for economic development that would be this easy. Sure we could redevelop one-story buildings on Elm Street and blow them up to three stories or whatever and we have Hackett Hill but to revitalize and to economically impact the inner City, the downtown, this to me is a no-brainer. What can we do to move in the same direction as you are?

Mr. Skelton answered I would say the most immediate near term one is if there was any sort of formal or informal expression of support to the Senate for restoring that funding because I think they need to hear from a pretty broad diverse array of sources. To your exact point alderman, we are not asking the Senate to fund \$250 million to move forward on rail tomorrow or this year. This is just the next logical economical step that any major infrastructure project would follow. You fund the project development phase, you do the environmental analysis, and you do the engineering analysis so then we will know exactly what the costs are and separately if groups like the chamber or others can do the economic analysis we can then compare and know what the right step is.

Alderman Long asked you had mentioned that you are looking to invoke a study?

Mr. Skelton responded that is correct. There is an incredible amount of information in the initial feasibility study focused on economic impact. The chamber is exploring whether we can take that analysis and expand upon it and be able to provide some deeper answers and information on what the true economic impact of the project would be across many different things whether it is economic development, job creation, workforce development, or property taxes. There are some good indicators in the initial study but it didn't dig down to that specific level so we are exploring whether we can bring on an economic consultant or some sort of entity that does this professionally that could do our own independent analysis that could be a tool for anyone who is looking at how to assess the value of this program.

Alderman Long replied in your opinion if everything went well when do you think you would have that study done?

Mr. Skelton answered I would like to see something in place in the next three to six months. It is not going to be in time for this legislative session. We know this is a long-term issue and we are going to be talking about it for a while. We would just like to have something right done comprehensively that could be a tool for the future.

Chairman Corriveau stated in the most recently conducted rail study with all of the data, the Rail Transit Authority mentioned a few significant benefits like property values rising across the City 10% but within a square mile of the tracks a 20% increase and I assume that would be mostly commercial properties. We are talking the millyard, downtown and south Elm Street I assume. The other big benefit they mentioned was 5,600 new jobs and then assuming it started running in 2020 or 2021 they said starting around 2030 you are adding over 1,000 jobs a year. Going off of that benefit and you alluded to this to a degree Mike, how

coming up to Manchester really is what makes the whole rail project work, is it also your understanding that those 5,600 new jobs that are being talked about that the vast majority of those are in Greater Manchester? The Rail Authority seemed to think...of course there would be some benefit to Nashua but they really said the biggest benefit comes to Manchester. Do you see those jobs going across all sectors of the City economy or the Greater Manchester economy or would you think that maybe it has a more tech heavy impact or a real estate heavy impact?

Mr. Skelton answered based on the analysis that has been done to date, it is more fair to say that it would be a broad impact across multiple sectors. I am not an expert in terms of the economic modeling that they completed as part of this study but my understanding is they have an economic model for projects like this where they plug in ridership numbers, investment numbers and economic numbers and are able to calculate certain impacts across jobs, investment and how it impacts the economy in broad terms. I think you are right that just given the fact of our size and the number of businesses that are here, Greater Manchester stands to benefit the most because we have the most business activity here. I think a lot of the questions you are getting to would actually be answered by the analysis that we are hoping to do as part of a stand-alone additional assessment. I would say the assessment that has been done right now is the general baseline of what the impact will be. What we would like to do is take that to another level and personalize it if you will to individual business sectors, to individual communities, and to Manchester specifically so we can really get our arms around what the impact will be so that we can all make an informed decision on if we are going to invest this much does it return itself in benefits. Certainly I can say anecdotally I have heard quite a bit from employers in the tech industry that they view this as a huge incentive and boom to their industry in terms of attracting workers here. We need to find a way to calculate that and quantify that to be able to demonstrate it as part

of this discussion. Anecdotally I am hearing quite a bit that that is something we need to explore.

Chairman Corriveau stated Newton Kershaw is in our audience. Newton I don't know if you would be willing to say something but obviously you are very well plugged in to the business community and you are an important figure in the real estate and development community. We will be bringing back real estate and development leaders sometime this summer to talk about the benefits but would you like to share any thoughts kind of dovetailing off of what Mike just said about job impact or the impact on property values across the City?

Newton Kershaw, Manchester Development Corporation, stated I can mirror what Mike said which is to say that it will absolutely have a positive economic impact. It comes down to do the impacts positively outweigh the ongoing costs of bringing it to the City. I think that bringing something like this to the City takes economic development drivers that are not currently here and bring them into our forum. Yes absolutely it would push up values of properties and yes absolutely it would increase the desirability of out-of-state workers to come and work within our community in our higher tech industries for example. It would have implications to people wanting to live here and commute into Boston and vice versa. So yes it is going to have a lot of positive economic impact. I personally support all steps forward to try to analyze whether this is something that is going to be economically feasible. I can't speak for the MDC. We don't have a position. I think that what the chamber is doing and what Mike is doing with regards to looking at the next steps is what we need to do at this point.

Mr. Wichert stated when you are talking about numbers and how you differentiate which community or whatever, I think if you look at the big picture one of the larger undeveloped tracts in this area is going to be adjacent to the airport off of

Pettingill Road there is X number of acres that was rezoned that now has highway access and in theory could have rail access. I think that area is a blank canvas. So whether that is high tech or whether that is manufacturing or whatever I think you are going to see a large influx of development there and they have already had some. UPS has a new facility that is going there and there is one other that is either on the books or in the process of being approved. I think you are going to see a lot there and then the hope would be that we get a lot of redevelopment in the inner City on underutilized properties so we can more gainfully put those on the books and use them.

Chairman Corriveau asked Mike, as you start moving forward on the chamber study would you mind keeping this committee in the loop as to the status and timeline and that sort of thing? I know you said it is not going to be any time in the next few months but we have been holding monthly rail meetings so if there are developments we can certainly revisit those later on in the year.

Mr. Skelton answered yes I would be happy to.

Alderman Long stated Mr. Wichert that was a great point. Is there a rail line to the airport right now? I don't think there is one there now so it is important that prior to the area in Londonderry getting fully developed that we have the phase in to the airport. My understanding is that there aren't any international airports that don't have rail transportation to it. It is in the best interest of the whole state, not just Manchester or south. It is important that prior to that becoming fully developed that we have the right line and that as the same time as those developments the line goes to those businesses.

Mr. Wichert responded if you look at those areas that get redeveloped and if you use Abby Road in Manchester as an example, 15 or 20 years ago that was not there and that has a development of...that to me is one of the things you are going to strive for if you want a commercial base in the City. It is a large area. I don't think you have as much infrastructure there but it still has the capability of sustaining an awful lot of jobs and new businesses.

Chairman Corriveau asked to dovetail off of what Alderman Long said, in the Pettingill Road area does the Derry/Londonderry chamber have any official position on rail. It seems that with the airport they would certainly achieve some significant benefits in addition to Manchester.

Mr. Skelton replied it is funny you mentioned that because I just asked their present CEO about that the other day. I think they are just starting to have that conversation. As a chamber they haven't been as focused on state level policy issues but I know with Will Stewart going there that is something they are trying to do more of going forward. I think they are teeing it up but you are exactly right that with their coverage of Londonderry as we do with some of our members in that area too, there is a huge potential intersection. To take it one step further, one of the things that we have tried to share with members of the community is...again we have to assess whether this economic opportunity is the right one to move forward on. There are a lot of indicators that it could have a very positive impact but it is big enough where...I think it is one of those projects where a rising tide lifts all boats. It doesn't really necessarily matter where your business is or where you live. Really across the state this has the potential to have a positive impact. If we are generating more business taxes because of this project in southern NH, that is going to benefit the entire state because of the huge chunk of revenue the state gets from business taxes to fund projects and services and all the things that we

rely on. There is really a state level multiplier that we have to look at when we look at...regardless of where you live or where your business is there is a potential impact, a positive one likely, to this project.

Alderman Long stated I feel the importance of this project continuing. I don't think Manchester can afford to step back a year or two or three. I think the more we know the realities of this project, the better we are going to be able to come up with solutions. Until that happens, we have pie in the sky solutions right now.

***Alderman Long** moved to recommend to the full board that a letter be sent to the Senate President and the Capital Budget Committee requesting support for the next phase of funding for passenger rail. **Alderman Ludwig** duly seconded the motion.*

Chairman Corriveau stated I certainly agree with you. I think that now is the wrong time to put this project on pause. We are just really starting to get into the nitty gritty of things and getting good data to analyze about the economic development, the jobs impact and the impact on property values and I think it is really important that we keep that momentum going so that we can move towards that time when this project will be a reality.

***Chairman Corriveau** called for a vote. There being none opposed, the motion carried.*

*There being no further business, on motion of **Alderman Long**, duly seconded by **Alderman Ludwig**, it was voted to adjourn.*

A True Record. Attest.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew Normand". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Clerk of Committee